

SOCL955: Practice Theory

Course Outline

When: Monday 27th April – Friday 1st May 2020 (Week 22)

Where: George Fox (Mon LT5; Tue LT2; Wed LT4; Thu Bowland North SR23; Fri George Fox LT4)

Postgraduate Coordinator: Emma Taylor

Email: e.taylor9@lancaster.ac.uk

Course Convenor/s: Elizabeth Shove, Stanley Blue, Ted Schatzki

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Credit: 20 Credits (10 ECTS Credits)

Assessment:

All participants:

1 x 600 – 1,000 word draft blog (submit by 1pm Mon 20th April)

Participants taking the course for credit:

1 x 600 – 1,000 word draft blog (submit by 1pm Mon 20th April);

1 x 1,000 revised blog, (submit by 1pm Mon 1st June);

1 x 4,000 word independent essay project, (submit by 1pm Mon 1st June).

Preparation:

In advance, participants read the required material (see page 9 below, a digital course reader sent on registration) and submit 600-1,000 words of a draft blog response to a particular article, chapter, or idea presented across several texts. The draft blogs will inform discussion and activities during the course. For inspiration, see:

<https://practicetheorymethodologies.wordpress.com/>

Participants use two lots of feedback (from a peer and from a course contributor) to inform the final version of their blog which they submit as one of two marked pieces of assessment after the course.

MOODLE:

All course information, many of the readings as well as lecture notes and links to other resources are available on MOODLE (Lancaster University's online platform). On registration you will be given access to the site. If you have any problems accessing the information, please contact the postgraduate administrator, Emma Taylor.

27th April

Day 1: Introduction

The first day of the practice theory module at LU will cover course preliminaries while also providing conceptual and historical background for the family of approaches to social life known as practice theory. The background will concern the place of practice theory in the wider theoretical landscape, both historical and contemporary. Delimiting this place will reveal what is distinctive about practice theories. Day 1 will also begin—through the examination of exemplary pieces of empirical research—the process of exploring key red threads that connect the work of practice theories. (Ted Schatzki, Elizabeth Shove, Stan Blue, Allison Hui, Nicola Spurling)

Session 1. 9.30-11.00

The Place of Practice Theory in Contemporary Theory and Research

The opening session will begin with a variety of preliminaries. We will discuss both the idea behind and the structure of the module, as well as what students can expect and how they will be involved in proceedings. Participants, both students and staff, will then introduce themselves, and there will be opportunity for students to ask questions about any aspect of the module other than assessment, which will be covered in session 2. Following these preliminaries, we will examine the place of practice theories in the wider historical and contemporary landscape of social theory. We will do this by considering the general ontology that practice theories promulgate and contrasting this with prominent alternatives, past and present. Doing this will begin the process of identifying what is distinctive about practice theory. (Ted Schatzki)

Break: 11.00-11.30

Session 2. 11.30-12.30

Assessment and expectations

In this session we set out the expectations for this course and go in to detail about the assessment.

Lunch 12.30-13.30 including time for visitors to register at the BASE

Session 3. 13.30-15.00

The Variety, Distinctiveness, and Disciplines of Practice Theory

Session 3 will pick up where Session 1 concluded. Just like, for example, individualisms, interactionisms, and systems theories, practice theories are multiple. They share certain characteristics but diverge on many others. This session will chart this variety. Attention will also be given to the disciplines in which practice theory is active, above all, sociology, geography, management, and education, and to some forms of policy-related debate. Particular attention will be paid to management (Katy Mason), education (Ted Schatzki), and notions of behavior change (Elizabeth Shove). This session will provide a more complete account of what is distinctive about the family of practice theories as a type of approach to social life. (Katy Mason, Ted Schatzki, Elizabeth Shove)

Break: 15.00-15.30

Session 4: 15.30-17.00

Connecting ideas: what is distinctive about practice theories

This session explores some of the distinctive features of practice theories as they are embedded in examples of empirical research. The method is to work through two articles, focusing on the contribution they make and what they add to relevant disciplines and debates. In the last part of this session we will draw out some of the threads explored in more depth in day 2.

Shove, E. and M. Pantzar (2005). "Consumers, producers and practices: understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic Walking." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5(1): 43-64.

Hui, A. (2013). "Moving with practices: the discontinuous, rhythmic and material mobilities of leisure." *Social and Cultural Geography* 14(8): 888-908. (Elizabeth Shove and Allison Hui)

28th April

Day 2 The material world in practice

Social theory and research have an uneven relationship to the material dimension of human life. While some disciplines such as economics (e.g., land and natural resources) and anthropology (e.g., reproduction and material provision) have always paid attention to this dimension, many others are only recently showing interest. Many approaches to social life have primarily paid attention to individuals and to relations among individuals, thereby eliding its materiality. Practice theories, by contrast, have long been concerned with materiality. Day 2 is designed to give participants an overview of how these theories have analyzed the complicated presence of material entities, events, and processes in social existence and the complex relationship of human activities and social processes to them. Day two will also allow participants to probe in greater detail particular issues or phenomena in this complex terrain such as infrastructures and nature.

Session 5. 9.00-10.30

How practice theories conceptualise the material world

This session will provide an overview of how practice theories conceptualize material, materials, and materiality and how they incorporate these phenomena into their accounts of social phenomena. It will approach this topic starting from the magical quality of the word "materiality," using this to open up consideration of some of the wide range of ways that contemporary theory deals with material states of affairs. Practice theory approaches will be thereby juxtaposed with alternatives such as those put forward in Marx, in ANT, in the work of Tim Ingold, and in consumption studies. (Nicola Spurling and Ted Schatzki)

Break: 10.30-11.00

Session 6. 11.00-12.00

Infrastructures in practice

What are infrastructures and how do they enable, reproduce and transform multiple social practices? This session draws on examples and studies of electricity and transport infrastructures as a means of responding to these questions and of generating more about the variety of material relations in practice, and about the forms of hardware on which these depend. (Elizabeth Shove)

Lunch/Floorball: 12.00-13.00

Session 7: 13.00-14.30

Reviewing and discussing your writing

This session will be taken up with one-to-one consultations in which you get the chance to discuss your draft blog contribution with either Ted, Elizabeth, Stan, Nicola or Allison. We will arrange the programme so that you also get time to discuss your contribution with other course participants, and act as commentator and discussant of other's work.

Break: 14.30-15.00

Session 8: 15.00-16.30

Matters of practice:

This session will extend discussions of the material world in previous sessions by taking up topics that highlight the presence of materiality in our lives: fostering sustainability, the relation of nature to practice, and the digitalisation of contemporary life. The issue will be what contributions theories of practice can make to these themes and to understanding their material character. (Elizabeth Shove and Ted Schatzki)

Break 16.30-17.00

Session 9: 17.00-18.00

Connecting ideas

In this session students will be provided with material resources with which they will build a representation of the relationship between materiality and the social in their own research projects or areas of interest. Students will discuss their models in small groups, articulate their position on socio-material connections in relation to practice theory, and compare similarities and differences within the group. To finish we will explore the range of positions on these issues across the class. (Nicola Spurling and Stan Blue)

29th April

Day 3: Complexes of practices, organisations, institutions and large social phenomena

The first part of day 3 explores ways of conceptualizing the diversity of relations among practices, focusing on how practices combine to form more extensive complexes and how large and small phenomena are constituted.

In the afternoon, contributors to the course introduce and discuss their current research – giving a sense of the directions in which practice theories are developing, and of a range of different sites in which these ideas are being mobilized. Examples include studies of cryptocurrencies, obesity, processes of accumulation, practices that cross organizational boundaries, and representing encounters in and of a plenum of practices.

Session 10. 9.00-10.30

How practice theories conceptualise ‘large’ social phenomena

The distinction between micro and macro phenomena is prominent in social thought. Sometimes disciplinary divisions are even defined by reference to this distinction (e.g., micro and macrosociology). Practice theories, however, have little truck with this infamous distinction. Instead of thinking in terms of levels, they tend to think of social life qua a field or plenum of practices as encompassing just one level. They also tend to spread these fields or plenum out largely across the surface of the earth. This more horizontal way of thinking suggests twofold: that it is valuable to think of social phenomena as composed of smaller and larger bundles or complexes of practices and that a myriad of relations link practices into complexes and complexes into constellations. The present session takes up these ideas. It first goes over the general considerations that lead from the micro-macro distinction to consideration of relations among small and large bundles and constellations. Following this, the session takes up a number of general issues and concepts that bear on conceptualizing, describing, and understanding these relations, bundles, and constellations. (Ted Schatzki and Elizabeth Shove).

Required reading: A. Hui et al. 2017. ‘Introduction’. *The Nexus of Practices. Connections, constellations, practitioners*, Abingdon: Routledge, 1-7.

Break 10.30-11.00

Session 11. 11.00-12.00

Organisations, institutions and their rhythms

This session extends discussions of the constitution of what might usually be thought of as ‘large’ social phenomena as the outcome of a particular organisation of practices. Taking the hospital as an example case of an ‘institution’, we follow Zerubavel (1979) in unpicking the temporal rhythms of hospital life that hold such confederations together and that reproduce institutions, in this case ways of delivering healthcare. The aim of this exercise is to bring further issues in to view: to reveal multiple qualities beyond the temporal that matter for practice-orders; to investigate how they become organised in the way they do, and to think more about how relationships between practices, and hence the total practice complexes that make institutions are strengthened and weakened, made and broken.

Lunch. 12.00-13.00

Session 12. 13.00-14.30

Current research (1)

One of the criteria of a good theory is that it informs insightful research. This holds true of practice theory. Sessions 12 and 13 feature new research, first on the topics of cryptocurrencies and money (Ted); obesity (Stan) and forms of accumulation (Elizabeth).

Break 14.30-15.00

Session 13. 15.00-16.30

Current research (2)

Featuring new work by Nicola Spurling, Allison Hui and Katy Mason.

Break 16.30-17.00

Connecting ideas

Session 14: 17.00-18.00

In this summary session, we introduce the 'Chart Atlas of Contemporary Practices' and explore different ways of representing changing connections between practices and their consequences for conceptualizing institutions and large social phenomena. Taking one example of representing relations between practices in time, we will manipulate time-profile maps of activity across the day to ask questions about the fixity and flexibility of connections; about mutually shaping relations and the determinacy of practice trajectories.

30th April

Day 4: The Dynamics of Social Life

Day 4 takes up the topic of the dynamics of social life. Dynamics studies, or alternatively, embraces change, including the processes and principles responsible for change. It thereby studies why things are as they are: how things come about, persist (or not), and change. Dynamics is a major topic and concern in social research and thought. It also encompasses a large range of more specific topics, including change, causality, explanation, maintenance, intervention, governance, and power, as well as repetition, novelty, and dissolution. Day four will combine sessions that discuss these issues with a practical exercise that asks participants to identify changing practices in and around Lancaster University.

Session 15. 9.00-10.30

Conceptualising dynamics

This session will examine certain basic concepts of dynamics. It will focus on the nature of change, causality, and explanation. Explanation is one of the basic cognitive goals pursued in social science. Change is one of the principal phenomena regarding which explanations are sought, and causality is what must be uncovered to provide them. The session will ask how theories of practices understand change and causality and provide explanations. It will also connect the topics of intervention and maintenance to these matters. A more focused and detailed discussion of power and governance will be provided in session 19. (Ted Schatzki)

Break 10.30-11.00

Session 16. 11.00-12.00

Learning and participation: becoming and the transformation of practitioners and practices

This session asks: following a turn to practices, what is learning? How do people learn new practices? We turn in the first instance to examples from sports and leisure practices to explore Lave and Wenger's (1991) argument that learning is situated (in practice) and depends on forms of structured, legitimate, and at first peripheral, participation. We extend this argument to consider the 'internal learning structures' that different kinds of leisure and working practices have. Starting with this approach let's us reflect on the idea of learning itself, and pose new questions about participation in practice: how does a practitioners' participation in a practice change? What are the boundaries of legitimate participation? How do those internal structures and boundaries themselves change? We finish by following Kemmis' (2019) argument that 'learning' is contained in practice architectures and his description of the birth of baby Miles and the transformation of a whole range of practices for his family as they become new parents and grandparents. This illustration helps us to see that a turn to practice decentralises the idea of learning, instead focusing on how practitioners are caught up in chains and complexes of activity that matter for who they will become.

Lunch 12.00-13.00

Session 17. 13.00-17.00

Studying social practices and how they change

Participants will work together in small groups to identify and investigate an example of a changing practice, or of changing relations between practices – that are in some way visible on the Lancaster University Campus. This is a practical exercise that involves working with the concepts and ideas introduced this far in order to produce a distinctively practice-theoretically informed piece of research. Introduced by Elizabeth Shove

Session 18. 17.00-18.00

Presenting and discussing studies of changing practices

At the end of the time allocated for this work, participants will present the results of their investigations to the rest of the course (around 10 minutes per group).

1st May

Day 5: Working with theories of practice in research and policy

The last day of the course reviews some of the challenges involved in working with theories of practice in research and policy. It also goes into detail on matters of power and governance, approaching this topic from two directions. Having considered what practice theories might contribute to the problem of conceptualizing power and governance, we focus on the role of practice theory *within* public health and energy policy.

Session 19. 9.00-10.30

Power and governance

Dominant interpretations of power presume that one person or group can make a decisive or inordinate difference to how other persons or groups act. Governance names specific forms power can take and means through which these forms work. Power and governance are important topics in contemporary social theory. This session will explore how practice theories approach these topics. It will also raise the question of what role power has in the dynamics of practices and analyses of them: whether power can itself be a cause and provide an explanation of anything or whether power is itself an effect of what causes and explains things in social life. (Matt Watson and Ted Schatzki)

Break 10.30-11.00

Session 20. 11.00-12.30

Practice oriented public policy

In this session we focus on some of the practical and also conceptual challenges involved in promoting 'practice oriented' public policy. As well as providing insights into how practice theories have been taken up in different areas of policy, this session reflects on broader questions about whether social practices can be 'governed' and if so, what this might involve.

Mike Kelly – experiences of working with practice theory in public health

Elizabeth Shove – experiences of working with practice theory in the energy sector

Lunch 12.30-13.30

Session 21. 13.30-15.00

Methods of studying practices and relations between them

This session focuses on some of the methods that have been used in studies inspired by practice theory. We will also make use of participants' own research, and reflect on some of the approaches adopted in the practical exercise on the previous day. Specific techniques include the use of statistics, video ethnography, interviews and the use of secondary data. (Elizabeth Shove, Nicola Spurling and Allison Hui)

Break 15.00-15.30

Session 22. 15.30-16.30

Looking back and looking forward

This final session looks back at the course as a whole, capturing some of the ideas and insights we have generated along the way and thinking about how these can be mobilized and developed in the future. There will also be a final opportunity to discuss assessment. (Stan Blue)

Reviving practices – 16.30 onwards

Since this course ends on 1st of May it is an ideal opportunity to review and revive some traditional May day practices – including maypole dancing in the courtyard.

Required Reading in Advance for the entire Module

- Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Richard Nice (tr). Stanford: Stanford University Press, Book I, 'Critique of Theoretical Reason.' [[we can cut down on this if needed]]
- Giddens, A. 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory*. Berkeley: U California Press, chapters 2-3, 'Agency, Structure' and 'Institutions, Reproduction, Socialisation'.
- Hui A, et al. 2017. *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practitioners*. London: Routledge, introduction and chapters 2, 7, 11, 12.
- Kemmis, S. et al. 2014. *Changing Practices. Changing Education*. Singapore: Springer, chapter 2, 'Praxis, Practice, and Practice Architectures.'
- Lave, J. and E. Wenger (1991). *Situated Learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Reckwitz A. 2002. 'Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing.' *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2): 243-263.
- Schatzki T. 1996. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 6, 'The Emergence of Practice' and 'Practices and Sociality'.
- Schatzki T. 2002. *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press. Chapter 2, 'Social Practices'.
- Shove E, et al. 2012. *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes*. London: Sage.
- Warde A. 2005. 'Consumption and Theories of Practice.' *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2): 131-153.

Suggested Readings

Day 1. Introduction

- Schatzki T, 2018. 'On Practice Theory, or What's Practices got to do [got to do] with it?', in *Education in an era of schooling: Critical perspectives of educational practice and action research*. C. Edwards-Groves et al. (ed), Singapore: Springer, 151-65.
- Shove E. 2009. 'Beyond the Abc: Climate Change Policy and Theories of Social Change.' *Environment & Planning A* 42 (6): 1273-1285.

Day 2. The Material World in Practice

- Bourdieu, P. 1979. 'The Kabyle House or the World Inverted'. Appendix to *The Logic of Practice*. Richard Nice (tr). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Ingold, T. 2007. 'Materials Against Materiality.' *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1): 1-16.
- Latour, B. 1992. 'Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts.' In *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, Wiebe E, Bijker and John Law (ed), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 225-58.
- Maller, C. and Y. Strengers. 2019. *Social Practices and Dynamic Non-Humans: Nature, Materials, and Technologies*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schatzki T. 2010. 'Materiality and Social Life.' *Nature and Culture* 5 (2): 123-149.
- Shove, E. and Trentmann, F. 2018. (eds). *Infrastructures in Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Podcast with Ted <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/videos-and-podcasts/>

Day 3. Complexes

- Blue, S. 2017. 'Institutional Rhythms: Combining Practice Theory and Rhythmanalysis to Conceptualise Processes of Institutionalization'. *Time and Society* April 7.
- Kemmis, S. et al. 2014. *Changing Practices, Changing Education*. Singapore: Springer. Chapter 3, 'Ecologies of Practices'.
- Friedland, R. forthcoming. 'The Logic of Practice: Ontologies, Teleologies, and the Problem of Institution'. *Research on the Sociology of Organizations*, Special Issue on Practices and Institutions.
- Schatzki, T. 2019. *Social Change in a Material World*. Abingdon: Routledge. Chapter 2. 'The practice plenum'.
- Schatzki, T. forthcoming. 'Forming Alliances'. *Research on the Sociology of Organizations*, Special Issue on Practices and Institutions.
- Shove, E, M. Watson and N. Spurling. 2015. 'Conceptualizing connections: Energy demand, infrastructures and social practices'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 18 (3): 274-87.
- Southerton D. 2003. "'Squeezing Time": Allocating Practices, Coordinating Networks and Scheduling Society.' *Time & Society* 12 (1): 5-25
- Mason, K., M. Friesl, and C. Ford. 2017. "Managing to Make Markets: Marketization and the Conceptualization Work of Strategic Nets in the Life Science Sector." *Industrial Marketing Management*, 67, 52-69.
- Mason, K., M. Friesl, and C. Ford. 2019. "Markets Under the Microscope: Making Scientific Discoveries Valuable through Choreographed Contestations." *Journal of Management Studies*, 56, 966-99.

Day 4. Dynamics

- Higgs, J. et al. 2012. *Practice-based Education. Perspectives and Strategies*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Jonas, M. and B. Littig. 2017. *Praxeological Political Analysis*. Abingdon: Routledge, part II, 'Praxeological analysis of political relations and processes'.

Kemmis, S. et al. 2014. *Changing Practices, Changing Education*. Singapore: Springer.

Schatzki, T. R. (2019). *Social Change in a Material World: How Activity and Material Processes Dynamize Practices*. London: Routledge, chapters 4 & 5, "Social Dynamics I: chains of activity" and "Social dynamics II: material events and processes".

Shove E, et al. 2012. *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes*. London: Sage.

Spaargaren, G. et al. (ed). 2016. *Practice Theory and Research: Exploring the Dynamics of Social Life*. Abingdon: Routledge, chapter 12, 'Conclusion: the relevance of practice theory for researching social change'.

Spurling N., et al. 2013. *Interventions in Practice: Reframing Policy Approaches to Consumer Behaviour*. Sustainable Practices Research Group.

Strengers, Y. and Maller, C. eds., 2014. *Social practices, intervention and sustainability: Beyond behaviour change*. Routledge.

Podcast with Stephen Kemmis <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/videos-and-podcasts/>

Day 5. Power, and Working with practice theory

Blue S, et al. 2016. 'Theories of Practice and Public Health: Understanding (Un)Healthy Practices.' *Critical Public Health* 26 (1): 36-50.

Hui, A. (2013). Moving with practices: the discontinuous, rhythmic and material mobilities of leisure, *Social and Cultural Geography* 14(8): 888-908.

Hui, A. and Walker, G. (2018). Concepts and methodologies for a new relational geography of energy demand: Social practices, doing-places and settings. *Energy Research and Social Science* 36: 21-29.

Latour, B. 1986. 'The Powers of Association'. In *Power, Action, and Belief: A Sociology of Knowledge?* John Law (ed), London, Routledge, 264-80.

Spaargaren, G. et al. (ed). 2016. *Practice Theory and Research: Exploring the Dynamics of Social Life*. Abingdon: Routledge, chapter 1, 'Introduction: using practice theory to research social life'.

Podcast with Matt Watson <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/videos-and-podcasts/>

Practice theory methodologies blog: <https://practicetheorymethodologies.wordpress.com/>